

VZCZCXRO5485
OO RUEH DU RUEH MR RUEH PA RUEH RN RUEH ROV RUEH TRO
DE RUEH KH #1201/01 2201139
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 071139Z AUG 08
FM AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1546
INFO RUEHZO/AFRICAN UNION COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUCNFUR/DARFUR COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHGG/UN SECURITY COUNCIL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RHMFISS/CJTF HOA PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 001201

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR AF PDAS THOMAS-GREENFIELD, AF/SPG, SE
WILLIAMSON, NSC FOR HUDSON AND BPITTMAN, ADDIS ABABA
PLEASE PASS TO USAU

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/06/2018

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREF](#) [PREL](#) [AU](#) [UN](#) [SU](#)

SUBJECT: FUR LEADERS CLEAVE TO SPLM, OUTLINE PRIORITIES

REF: KHARTOUM 1117

Classified By: CDA Alberto M. Fernandez, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) CDA Fernandez met on August 7 with traditional Fur tribal leaders from Nyala in South Darfur, Ahmed Rajal (Maqdoum of the Fur) and Suleiman Ishaq just returning from an SPLM-organized conference in Juba of Sudan's marginalized people (including Darfuris, Easterners like the Beja, and Nubians from Wadi Halfa). Rajal and Ishaq, who in addition to their roles as tribal nobility, run a Darfur NGO called "Al-Tajamua Al-Ahli" (The Private or Special Gathering), said that the conference had opened their eyes even more on how the sufferings of Sudan's marginalized people are alike. "We heard the stories of the Nubians, with tears in their eyes, on how they are oppressed and treated."

KIIR FOR PRESIDENT

¶2. (C) Both had just come from meeting with First Vice President Salva Kiir in Khartoum and were enthusiastic about Kiir challenging Sudanese President Al-Bashir in next year's election. "He is not a Muslim, but he is an African and understands our plight in Darfur." They said that Fur and other traditional leaders have now moved closer to a position supportive of the SPLM. They expressed their appreciation for the principled stand of the United States, UK, and France on the Darfur crisis and asked that the United States keep the pressure on. "Don't let Al-Bashir off the hook cheaply," pleaded the elderly but fiery Maqdoum who seemed frailer than the last time we saw him. Despite both diabetes and prostrate problems, the Maqdoum (who is probably in his seventies) has been a thorn in the side of the ruling NCP for years and has become even more outspoken as the suffering in Darfur has continued. The NCP has sought to undermine him by setting up a pliant, younger relative Salahudin Rajal, as a rival Maqdoum.

¶3. (C) Maqdoum Ahmed noted that the West is right to engage with the Khartoum regime but needs to be under no illusions about the nature of this government. He recalled the GOS displacing Darfuri IDPs last year from a plot of land in Soba in order to offer it to Palestinian refugees from Iraq, "they are such hypocrites." He added that "even when they are on their best behavior," the regime does wrong. He described how the regime bribed and bought people during President Bashir's recent tour of Darfur (reftel), including IDPs and traditional leaders, to get them to repudiate the ICC and mouth empty slogans in support of the President, "he could have used his time and money to promote real reconciliation in Darfur," but that didn't happen. Both underscored their support for the ICC and for the court going after "at lot

more than Bashir."

REAL CHANGE, NOT RHETORIC

14. (C) Despite their belief in justice and in the regime's obvious guilt, they noted that the authorities in Khartoum could take steps to qualitatively change the dynamic in Darfur and cause them to soften their zeal for the ICC prosecutor to go after Sudan's President. Rajal raised the constant irritant of the NCP supporting, arming and funding nomadic Arab tribes from neighboring Chad, Niger, Burkina Faso, and Mauritania and attempting to settle them on Fur land in Wadi Salih in West Darfur to the foothills of Jebel Marra. "The regime could remove them now, these aren't even Sudanese janjaweed - they are foreigners."

15. (C) The second thing the regime could do is to undertake, rather than talk about, compensation and restoration of what was taken from Darfur's displaced people. They should do this rapidly and with transparency and international oversight "because we otherwise will assume they are stealing the money." The Government needs to move from funding war and subversion in Darfur to providing services, including for IDPs who want to return home voluntarily to their villages. "They have money, they are not poor, but they choose to spend it buying weapons, tribes and politicians."

16. (C) The third issue is security. The Fur were all for UNAMID deployment, even though it has been too long in coming, but "why not make IDPs responsible - at least in part

KHARTOUM 00001201 002 OF 002

- for their own security?" You could have police or civil defense and militia formed from the IDP population. Rajal noted that one thing that successive Khartoum governments had done, not just the current NCP, was to arm the Arabs and disarm the Fur.

EMPOWERING THE DARFURIS

17. (C) Ishaq commented that the Government could also take steps to redress the political imbalance they have created in Darfur. "Real power is in the hands of Khartoum, and the trappings of power in Darfur are mostly in the hands of the Arab tribes." The NCP has gerrymandered districts throughout Darfur's three states to maximize its hold on power and weaken the representation of the African tribes (although two of the three Governors of Darfur's three states, are held by Africans, one of them a former rebel). Six out of the nine local districts in South Darfur are held by Arab tribes "unfit to govern" while three are held by Fur (Kaas, Nyala and Shearia). He would like to see Darfur become one region again.

18. (C) While the regime could do a lot to change its ways in Darfur, if it had the political will," the tribal leaders also asked for expanded American help. Rajal noted the importance of strengthening ties between Darfur civil society outside the camps and the IDPs. "The regime wants to keep us apart." His NGO had submitted a proposal to USAID to strengthen and nurture these links. The people of Darfur desperately need education. "Even if the regime gave us the opportunity for greater participation, we can't take full advantage of it because we don't have enough trained or educated people." CDA Fernandez noted that there are US efforts to strengthen Darfur's three universities but that he had so far been unsuccessful in getting one scholarship out of Washington for Darfur, despite repeated attempts over the past year. The Maqdom highlighted a "new and growing problem" which is street children in Darfur's cities. Boys and girls with no future, becoming addicted to sniffing glue, paint and gasoline, and prey to all kinds of vice, is a

relatively new phenomenon in Darfur. "We urgently need programs to address this ugly situation which is the result of the terrible stress and pressures put on Darfuri society over the past five years."

19. (C) Comment: Despite their chronic disorganization, the SPLM's dogged pursuit of the Fur is smart politics, good for Sudan, and should be encouraged. Darfuri leaders like the Magdoun, who are traditional leaders, still live in Darfur, and seek to remain close to increasingly radicalized populations in IDP camps, are all too rare in this troubled region. His description of steps the NCP could take "right now" if it really wanted to change the situation for the better is quite accurate. It would involve a sea change by the NCP, however, abandoning its tested and lethal policies of divide and rule, bribery and murder which has enabled it to so far maintain its precarious hold on power in Darfur. Rajal's pleas for US support are not new although the issue of drug-addicted street children is not one that has been usually raised with us by Darfuri leaders. It is one more troubling phenomenon in a more urban, fragmented and harsher Darfur that is emerging out of the rubble of the Khartoum regime's disastrous policies. End comment.
FERNANDEZ